(1962-1977) 1980
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Film-Going Habits

In the eyes of many Badagas one of the greatest benefits of the bus system is that it permits frequent trips to cinemas in the towns. Most families now see films often, and what they see has a great impact on them. Some of the most popular films are dramatizations of Indian history or of epic stories which reinforce traditional ideas about Hinduism and the nature of the universe. But equally popular are the films about modern life, about social problems like divorce, widow remarriage, 'love' marriages and intercasts marriage; dramas which are presented against a background of affluence that is unfamiliar yet fascinating to the villager. These modern themes extol city life, non-traditional marriage practices and luxury goods such as cameras, watches, radios, mechanical toys and sports cars. The impact of these films is already clear: younger Badagas yearn for watches, motorcycles, and all the other paraphernalia they have come to associate with modern urban life.

Radio

Among the most commonly desired gadgets are transistor radios, which are appreciated partly as a source of light music and partly as a prestige symbol. Only the weathier Badagas own radios, but every village has at least one set, either owned privately or provided by the government; many teashops also have radios. All-India Radio presents much government propaganda, especially talks directed towards improvement of farming and village co-operatives. These broadcasts—in the Tamil language—are not very much listened to, because the vast majority of village radios are constantly tuned to light music coming from the commercial Radio Ceylon. In a sample of 420 Badaga men and women in 1963, 17% said they never listened, 16% only heard music, 38% heard news as well as music, 14% listened specifically for news broadcasts and only 2% mentioned informative talks as being of interest to them.[14] The higher the incidence of *regular* listening, the higher the popularity of news broadcasts, two variables correlated no doubt with the length of time a village has been electrified.

Newspapers

My survey on the use of the media in 1963 showed that radio is

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amorous affairs. If a man wanted a particular girl he would note when she went to the menstrual hut, and would then persuade a female friend to stay in the hut with her and turn her fancy away from her husband and towards this unannounced suitor. A girl's parents or husband would therefore keep a careful watch on who else was in the hut. In a small hamlet, on the other hand, the female population might be so little that a woman would often find herself alone in the hut. In that case she would be afraid to sleep there by herself for fear of Kurumba sorcerers and ghosts. (This fear ran counter to the Badaga belief that Kurumbas themselves were afraid of menstruating women, and hence would never enter the hut and secretly ravish or attack any menstruating woman through sorcery.) Because of this fear, a woman who was alone in the hut would persuade another who was due to menstruate in the next few days to tell her family the period had already begun, so that the two could sleep together in the hut. This ruse would not allow the second woman to spend extra time in the hut however, and she might well continue to menstruate after leaving it, but would keep the matter secret. Sometimes a woman would be already pregnant when she entered the hut for such purely social reasons. Since the number of weeks until she came to term might be calculated from the last day a woman was in the hut, it therefore could happen that she gave birth in what seemed to be the eighth month of pregnancy.

When a group of women were together in the menstrual hut they could engage in a number of interesting activities. The only work they were permitted to do was to gather firewood for use there, prepare their own food, and wash their clothes (at a place separate from the usual spot). It was generally while in the hut that an adolescent girl underwent tattooing. The only game the women played was "eye-bean," an ancient Old World game which involved the redistribution of beans in a series of a dozen depressions. In general girls were not allowed to play this until they had their first pregnancy, but younger girls did play it too while in the menstrual hut.

Cooking vessels kept in the hut were common to the whole village, and were in constant use. There was no need to destroy or even purify them after use, since everyone involved with them was in a state of pollution. Foodstuffs could be given to the women by their relatives, but it was taboo to give them cooked foods. No pot, basket or cloth would be taken to the hut with food, since it could not be taken back home afterwards. Thus when a woman in the hut was

212 of females, were literate (India 1962: 133). Even old Badagas are often familiar with daily news stories, with weather forecasts and political predictions.

177 •517 (484) (494) One of the most important benefits of the bus system, at least in the eyes of the Badagas, is that it permits frequent trips to the movie houses. Film-going is an important event in the lives of most Badaga families today; what they see has a great impact on them; and in nearly every family there is at least one film-goer. Some of the most popular films are dramatizations of Indian history or of the epic stories. These are presented in such a way that they reinforce traditional ideas about Hinduism and the nature of the universe. But equally popular are the films about "modern" life, about social problems such as divorce, widow remarriage, "love" marriages and intercaste marriages; dramas which are presented against a background of affluence that is a new experience to the villager. These "modern" themes extol urban life, untraditional marriage practices, and the desirability of owning such luxury goods as cameras, watches, radios, mechanical toys and sports cars. The impact of these films is already clear: younger Badagas yearn for watches, cars, cameras and all the other paraphernalia that 517 they have come to associate with modern urban life. A sample of 301 Badaga males in 1963 gave this information about their film-going habits:

Frequency:

Never go	17.6%
Rarely go	23.9%
Once a month	19.3%
Once a week	19.3%
More than once a week	1.7%
(Not ascertained)	18.3%

•517 Preferred movie theme:

No films seen	17.6%
All kinds	19.6%
Modern social themes	19.3%
Historical or religious themes	22.3%
Adventures and thrillers	2.0%
(Not ascertained)	19.3%

[125] The sample was drawn, on a random basis, from all Badaga hamlets in the stippled areas shown in the map on p. 30.

207 [554] Transistor radios are highly valued but difficult to obtain in India. They are valued partly as a prestige symbol and partly as a constant source of light music. Only the wealthy Badagas own radio sets, but nearly every hamlet has at least one set, either privately owned or provided for public use by the government. Many tea-shops also have radios. It is therefore easy enough for people to hear the radio, even if they cannot own one. Radios in India carry much government propaganda, especially information directed toward the improvement of farming practices and village cooperatives. These broadcasts are not often heard in the Nilgiris, however, because the vast majority of sets are constantly tuned to light music coming from the commercial Radio Ceylon. In a sample of 420 Badaga men and women, 16.9% said they never listen to radio, 15.5% only heard music, 38.3% heard news as well as music, and 14.5% listened specifically to news broadcasts; only 1.6% of the sample mentioned informative talks as being of interest to them.

207 517 [125]

[125] (This sample, like all others in this study, was drawn only from the stippled areas shown on the map, p. 30. These areas were selected so as to represent the full range of economic activities, distances from towns, and relations with the settlements of other communities, throughout the Nilgiri Plateau.)